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# The Hancock Report

Sept. 1, 2005

Greetings Everyone!

Mother Nature has shown us her might again with Hurricane Katrina. The pictures we are seeing are devastating to say the least. Our Department of Public Health has sent a team to help with issues that may arise due to sewage, water and environmental problems. It is so hard to understand why anyone would loot or shoot at one of the National Guard helicopters. It seems tragedy brings out the best in most and the worst in some.

This natural event will affect our state in many different ways, I think. Now that our farmers are getting close to harvest, the escalating cost of fuel will have a huge impact and then combine this with the inability of the Gulf of Mexico region to accept grain shipments. More than 50 percent of grain exports go through the gulf; this could create a storage problem in our state.

In this time of need, one can contribute to the Red Cross by calling 1-800-help-now or visit <https://www.americanredcross.org>.

## Around the district

Congratulations to the Western Dubuque School system on receiving their first shipment of Soy Diesel for the district transportation. It makes sense to supplement fuels with our renewable resources such as soybeans and corn.

## Great Places abound in Iowa

This spring, the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs solicited applications for a new program called Iowa Great Places. The initiative is designed to make good places great by cultivating the unique and

authentic qualities that make Iowa's communities, regions, neighborhoods and districts special.

I know that a great quality of life is essential to our economic development, and folks across the state seem to agree. More than 145 Great Places applications poured in from 91 Iowa counties.

Currently, coaches are meeting with each applicant to create a Great Places Profile and develop an offer. Three places will be selected to become Iowa's pilot Great Places by October 1.

I'm really excited for the applicants in our area who applied to be a Great Place:

Anamosa  
Cascade  
Limestone Bluffs  
Monticello  
Olin's Town Square  
Iowa's Great River Road

## Dubuque County organizations receive AmeriCorps grants

The Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service granted \$1.7 million in AmeriCorps grants to 11 community organizations that will place 259 AmeriCorps volunteers across Iowa.

Congratulations to the Dubuque County recipients: Keepers of the Land, Partners-in-Learning and the Iowa Legal Aid Program.

Statewide, AmeriCorps is credited with tutoring and mentoring 5,431 students in K-12 and restoring and maintaining 140 miles of Iowa trails. In addition, 3,000 elderly Iowans received donated cell phones for emergency response.

## New jobs, quality jobs for Iowans

As we look for ways to attract and maintain jobs in Iowa, we must consider the types of jobs we want to attract. We must go after quality jobs that will bring more

people into Iowa and keep younger Iowans in our state. We need companies that will take care of their workers and value their services.

In attracting jobs, we should appeal to companies that will meet their obligations to injured workers through the state's workers' compensation system. These benefits help families get by while the worker recovers and gets back to work. We should not remove the safety net of unemployment insurance. This helps families and communities stay afloat in the event of layoffs and plant closings while the workers search for new jobs.

On this Labor Day weekend, we must honor the sacrifice and pride of our workers. We need to make sure they can earn living wages and benefits that are not discarded in the name of "cutting the cost." Iowa has one of the lowest costs of doing business – the third lowest in the nation, according to a recent study by the Milken Institute.

As the Legislature develops and supports business incentives in an effort to draw more jobs to Iowa, I know that it is only high-quality jobs that will retain our best workers and our new graduates, attract new people, and increase the number of small businesses in our cities and towns.

A high-quality job that can support a family and provide benefits is a key to ensure that Iowa continues to be the best place to live, work and raise a family.

## Expanding educational opportunities

The quality and quantity of educational opportunities are becoming more important to attain high-skill, high-wage jobs in the new economy.

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Business leaders and educators insist that students leave school with the skills necessary to be successful in today's knowledge-based market.

For the first time in several years, the Legislature took significant steps during the 2005 session to increase our investment in public schoolchildren, particularly supporting student achievement. This includes putting more resources into reducing class sizes and developing a new early childcare initiative to ensure all of Iowa children start school ready to learn.

I was proud of the efforts to maintain our commitment to public education with a 4-percent increase in basic school spending for the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years.

The Legislature also delivered on its commitment to reduce class sizes, a program that has helped to im-

prove student achievement across the state. This program has been credited with stopping the decline in fourth-grade reading scores that we'd seen since 1993.

This year, we also took a giant step toward ensuring that more Iowa students come to school ready to learn. Recognizing that stronger preschool programs are a key to Iowa's educational system, we invested \$20 million to improve preschool programs. The goal is to have a comprehensive, targeted approach to early childhood education that will provide the biggest educational benefit for our investment.

My colleagues and I are starting to put together a list of education priorities for the next session, which starts in January. I'd be interested in hearing your ideas for improving our schools, increasing student

achievement and expanding opportunities so our children can start school prepared to learn—and leave school prepared for the high-skill, high-wage jobs in the new economy.

#### **Additional information**

For additional information, you can visit [www.iowasenate.com/democrats.org](http://www.iowasenate.com/democrats.org)

The Hancock Report is a regular message from State Senator Tom Hancock. To provide comments or ask for additional information when the Legislature is not in session, contact Senator Hancock at his home by calling (563) 876-3219, sending an e-mail message to [thancock@mchsi.com](mailto:thancock@mchsi.com) or sending a letter to: State Senator Tom Hancock, 310 E. Main, Epworth, IA 52045. To subscribe or be removed from this newsletter, please send an e-mail message.

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